



Space Family Education, Inc.

2101 NASA Parkway, Bldg 211/AHD • Houston, Texas 77058

Phone: (281) 483-4734 • Fax: (281) 483-4369

To: SFEI Staff and Membership
From: Christine G. Wood, Executive Director
Re: SFEI Director transition and other items
Date: May 4, 2007

Dear SFEI Staff and Members,

I consider it a privilege and an honor to have the opportunity to be the Executive Director for the JSC CCC. During the past 2 months transition time, I have worked closely with the Board members, Ms. Dianna Ritter and Ms. Sylvia Galvan to observe and learn the daily workings of the child care center. I have also tried to spend a lot of time building relationships with the staff, children and parents. I truly appreciate all the help the staff, Board members and parents have extended to me during this time. You have built a wonderful child care center that is far beyond most child care centers in Houston. It is my goal to achieve the NAC accreditation and to continue to introduce/review current educational standards and methods in the early childhood education field that can be implemented into the classrooms and will help us move to the next level of care.

I believe in and try to maintain an open door policy. I also believe in direct and honest communications. Please help me to spread this throughout the center. If you have a question, comment or just want to talk, my door is always open unless someone else is talking to me. In that case, I believe in strict confidentiality and I will not reveal what someone tells me unless I have their permission.

During the transition, I have seen some positive changes occurring in the center. The children are participating in more “hands on” activities and using their language skills to help solve problems. I wish everyone could have seen and heard the children on Thursday as they prepared their ice cream and then rolled it in the cans on the floor. There was laughter, excitement and lots of questions. My plans call for us to offer more activities that are “hands on” and take some collaborative efforts to “solve” the problem they are given.

I have also seen some resistance to change, which is normal and expected. My philosophy on change is to take it slow and make sure everyone understands the process and the final objective and then to proceed with the changes. However, that being said, sometimes there are things that fall into the category of “must happen now” and without any input because the changes are necessary to keep the children safe, certain unplanned staff changes and circumstances that are not in my control. When those instances occur, I will try to inform everyone as quickly and efficiently as I can.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and parents for the wonderful cooperation and communications that we had during the April 20 shooting incident. The staff pulled together and operated as a professional team and maintained the daily activities as much as possible, thereby keeping the children calm and as much unaware of the terrible incident as possible.

Thank you to the parents for cooperating, especially to the ones who were anxiously waiting outside the center when we couldn’t unlock the doors. Debbie Berdich and I will be working with several NASA Safety Team members to update our emergency plans and our shelter-in-place arrangements. When the updates are complete, we will make sure everyone is informed and the necessary adjustments will be made.

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We have had to make a change to our school calendar. Graduation for the Pre-K and Kindergarten classes has been moved to Tuesday, May 22, 2007 at 6:30 PM. We are very sorry for this inconvenience but there was a mix-up with the reservation at the Gilruth Center and this was the best solution available.

There is one safety issue that we need to address immediately. We have a Close Call report in progress. It is concerning the crosswalk on the driveway under the porto cache. We are working with the JSC Safety Team to work out a safe solution to this problem. In the meantime, I strongly encourage parents and others that pick up or drop off children to park beyond the yellow striping on the driveway and to reinforce with your child that they are to walk across the driveway on the crosswalk. Please encourage them to stop, look both ways and listen before proceeding across the driveway and/or parking lot. If you have a spare hand, it would be helpful to hold your child's hand until they learn to stop, look both ways and listen. We are asking that you work with us to keep your child safe. If you have any suggestions on how we could improve this situation, please talk to Debbie Berdich or myself. We are going to have a brainstorming session with safety very shortly to work on a resolution to this problem. I assure you, we are open to listen to any suggestion.

Several teachers and parents have expressed concern about the curriculum for next year. There are several items that need to be addressed at one time, but I will break them into separate objectives to make it a little clearer as to our final goal.

1. NAC accreditation – Our NAEYC accreditation expired in Feb. 2007. We were already in the process of Self-study for the NAC (National Accreditation Commission For Early Care and Education Programs) since Dec. 2005. I have applied for and received an extension for this process until March 2009. There are several instructional changes that will need to be made in order to be in compliance with NAC and to receive their accreditation. We are in the process of having the NAC accreditation manual copied for every teacher. We will also have 2 or 3 extra copies per room to be checked out for the parents to review at their request. Or, the manual is available on the JSC CCC website at http://www1.jsc.nasa.gov/childcare/Accreditation/NAC_Accreditation.pdf
2. As was stated in the Board memo, I was asked to review the current curriculum and make some recommendations. Some major things that I have noticed about our current curriculum are the use of workbooks. They are not age-appropriate for Preschool and Kindergarten and are not acceptable in the NAC accreditation. The children should be active learners in the classroom. All activities should be “hands on”, age and developmentally appropriate and “concrete” in nature. Paper and pencil worksheets are abstract not concrete. The children should be able to manipulate the materials and solve the same or even more complex problems than are present on a worksheet. When the children need to communicate a message they are encouraged to use the proper words but if that is not possible they will be encouraged to write a note using their knowledge of the alphabet. Inventive spelling is a great and wonderful beginning to language. The children will be encouraged to use writing in normal everyday circumstances like grocery lists in Dramatic Play, class names when playing school, writing letters to friends, etc. However, some worksheets may be used for assessment purposes.

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3. All art should be the child's idea of how something looks not someone else's idea. Art projects should be connected to the theme and every project should look different than their friends because every one sees the world in a different way.
4. The other thing that is very apparent to me is that there is no continuity from room to room. Outwardly, it appears each teacher has her own curriculum. I firmly believe in giving the teachers freedom to teach in the best way possible but I also know that each room should have certain standards that they should meet before the child advances to the next room.
5. I will be forming a Curriculum Committee to examine and review several different curriculums that are available to us. If you would like to participate in this effort, please email me your name and contact information so I can compile a list. The first meeting will be held in a few weeks.

We have some exciting plans for the future. I would like to have a "Parent Workday" and fix-up a few things on the playground. I would also like to offer some Parent Workshops during the lunch hour time.

Again thank you for the opportunity to work in the JSC Child Care Center and I look forward to working with each and every one of you in educating your children.

Sincerely,

Christine G. Wood
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